

**Smith, Tasha**

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**From:** sandy.sears@gmail.com on behalf of Sandra Sears <sls83@cornell.edu>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 23, 2017 3:56 PM  
**To:** JudTestimony  
**Subject:** Proposed House Bill 7285, An Act Concerning Complaints That Allege Misconduct By Law Enforcement Agency Personnel

Written Testimony Supporting  
Proposed House Bill 7285, An Act Concerning Complaints That Allege Misconduct By Law Enforcement Agency Personnel

Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Sandra L. Sears, and I have been a resident of Manchester, Connecticut for over 35 years. I am submitting this email to testify in support of Proposed House Bill 7285, which intends to ensure compliance with the provisions of section 7-294bb of the Connecticut general statutes concerning the acceptance, processing, and investigation of a complaint from a member of the public relating to alleged misconduct committed by law enforcement agency personnel.

I was an adjunct professor of psychology and computer science for over 25 years. I had the distinct honor and pleasure of teaching many students who were (and are) members of the law enforcement community. Many, but not all, of my law enforcement students were part of the LEAA (Law Enforcement Assistance Administration) program. My students taught me as much as I taught them. One of the most important things that I learned about policing from my students is that successful policing is strongly based on trust between the police and the citizens whom the police serve. My students made it clear to me that transparency builds trust and that trust benefits officers as well as citizens. I found the vast majority of these students to be caring, thoughtful public servants who wished to be the best that they could be in their chosen profession. A number of my students have become my personal friends, and I feel grateful to be protected by these individuals. I write to you today in the spirit of what my students have taught me.

Proposed House Bill 7285 recognizes that our current police complaint process does not provide the transparency that is beneficial to citizens and to police officers. I support the intention of Proposed House Bill 7285, but ask that this committee amend this bill so that its intent can be fully realized. A recent survey by the ACLU clearly shows that many Connecticut police agencies still make it difficult for members of the public to obtain information regarding complaint forms and processes easily. In some cases, this lack of transparency violates state law. I searched the Manchester Police Department web site, for example, and I was unable to find any information about how to submit a complaint. I believe that it is very important to amend H.B. 7285 to:

1. Establish meaningful penalties for law enforcement agencies that do not comply with state complaint acceptance and investigation laws
2. Create a standardized complaint form that is in compliance with best practices and translated into all commonly spoken languages in Connecticut, and
3. Require law enforcement agencies to track complaint data and to annually report specific complaint information to the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management.

Establishing a transparent, accessible police complaint process is necessary for creating a truly fair and just police force in Connecticut - one that community members can trust, and thus one that provides maximum safety for police officers themselves. Amending H.B. 7285 will serve to enhance the community's faith in the police complaint process, will ensure that we hold our law enforcement agencies accountable, and will enable police officers to perform at a standard that we can all admire.

I urge the members of this committee to amend and support Proposed House Bill 7285.

With respect,  
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